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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000540

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/05/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [FJ](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: CHINESE IN FIJI KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN, HOPE FOR  
THE BEST

REF: SUVA 539 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Larry Dinger, per 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Chinese community in Fiji, estimated at 6,000-10,000 persons, is hoping to ride out the crisis caused by the military's announcement that it is deposing the lawfully elected government of Fiji. A PRC Embassy official told us the Embassy knows of only 17 Chinese residents who have left Fiji because of concerns for their safety. The Embassy is working with community leaders, he said, to finalize contingency evacuation and "stay in place" plans. A prominent Chinese-Fijian leader said most of these plans and other emergency preparations have been generated by the Chinese community itself, though it welcomes any support it can get from the PRC Embassy and the Taiwan Trade Mission in Suva. Both officials we spoke to said they do not expect any violence against the Chinese community, but are taking precautions in light of the violence against Chinese in Tonga and the Solomon Islands. The PRC government has not taken a strong stand against the military's actions, in keeping with its "non-interference" policy, though it did endorse the UN Security Council press statement on Fiji. End summary.

#### PRC Embassy Developing Contingency Plans

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¶2. (C) Fei Mingxing, DCM at the PRC Embassy in Suva, told us the Embassy is working with the Chinese community in Fiji in developing contingency plans should the military takeover in Fiji lead to unrest or violence. The Embassy held meetings with community leaders each of the last two weeks, and contacted leaders by phone after the announcement by Commander Bainimarama 12/05 that he had assumed control of the government. The Embassy has made tentative plans to help with an evacuation, should it become necessary. Embassy staff and families all remain in Suva, said Fei. Employees have been advised to stock up on water and food supplies, based on the assumption that the Embassy will adopt a "stay in place" response to any unrest. Fei said he is aware of only 17 permanent Chinese residents of Fiji who have left because of safety concerns. He had heard of no problems since Bainimarama's announcement. Fei estimated that 6,000-10,000 people of Chinese descent currently reside in Fiji.

#### Chinese Community Taking Proactive Stance

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¶3. (C) Dixon Seeto, former president of the Chinese Association of Fiji, told us 12/05 that while the PRC Embassy has been helpful, the local Chinese community in Fiji

initiated almost all the contingency planning mentioned by Fei. Few among the entrenched Chinese community, he noted, have PRC passports. The Chinese Association has arranged for a large water tank to be installed at the Sun Yatsen school in Suva, the likely assembly point for Chinese if there is large-scale unrest. It has also tentatively arranged transportation to Nadi should an evacuation become necessary.

The association is working closely with the police to ensure Chinese farmers in rural Fiji are looked after. The association has provided cell phones and other equipment to the police to make communication easier, he said. Seeto said his association works closely with the Taiwan Trade Mission in Suva, as well as the PRC Embassy, and will accept help from either.

14. (C) Seeto agreed with Fei that long-term Chinese residents will ride out the crisis, but said that more recent Chinese arrivals in Fiji, especially those with PRC passports or dual-citizenship, may pull up stakes more quickly. He noted with some disdain that the newly elected President of the Chinese Association (a New Zealand dual-citizen) was among those who have already left. Seeto has therefore once again assumed the defacto presidency of the association. Seeto said that members of the established Chinese community in Fiji, numbering about 6,000, are accepted and well-integrated citizens of the country, and therefore feel relatively safe. Nevertheless, given the violence against Chinese in Tonga and the Solomons, the Chinese community must be prepared for the worst.

PRC Keeping its "Non-Interference" Stance

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15. (C) Fei told us 12/06 that, as far as he is aware, the PRC has no plans to make any statement about the military's actions, in keeping with its "non-interference" foreign policy. He noted, however, that the PRC endorsed the 11/29 Security Council press statement on Fiji which called upon the Fiji military to "exercise restraint and avoid taking any action that would undermine the rule of law and run counter to the best interests of the people of Fiji."

Comment

16. (C) We agree with Seeto and Fei that widespread violence against Chinese is unlikely. However, Chinese businesses are prominent throughout Fiji, and especially in central Suva. They could be a target if there is any breakdown in law and order after the military takeover. Given the violence that took place against Chinese businesses in Tonga, the proactive stance of the Chinese community seems entirely appropriate.

DINGER